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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

Executive Registry

81-8430

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29 SEP 1981

Editor

The New York Times
229 West 43rd Street
New York, New York 10036

DDA REGISTRY

FILE Security-4

Dear Sir:

Your editorial of 28 September 1981, "A Dumb Defense of Intelligence," incorrectly represents the position I have taken on legislation to protect the identities of covert agents. I have consistently supported and advocated the Senate language in S. 391 and H.R. 4, as amended and passed by the House on 23 September, as more certain to be effective in ending the pernicious unauthorized disclosures which are jeopardizing our nation's intelligence efforts and threatening those engaged or assisting in difficult and dangerous assignments abroad.

Opponents of this crucial legislation, in an effort to delay and obstruct final enactment, are quick to allege its constitutional infirmity. However, the legislation in its current form has had the bipartisan support of the Carter and now the Reagan White House and Justice Departments. We are confident that the legislation will pass constitutional muster. There is no doubt that disclosures of agent identities constitute a clear danger to this nation's first line of defense, its intelligence apparatus. Recently, the U.S. Supreme Court in Haig v. Agee stated that such "conduct ... presents a serious danger to American officials abroad and serious danger to the national security" and that these disclosures "... clearly are not protected by the Constitution."

We can no longer afford delay. Every day means more unauthorized disclosures, more operations compromised, more lives endangered, more loss of confidence in our ability to keep secrets on the part of foreign intelligence services willing to cooperate with us. The Senate should delay no longer.

Sincerely,

William J. Casey
William J. Casey
Director of Central Intelligence

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